



**bryanston organic  
& natural market**

**The Bryanston Organic & Natural Market's Selection Committee  
position statement on  
Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO)**

**Introduction**

The Bryanston Organic & Natural Market supports the "precautionary principle" in relation to genetic engineering in agriculture. Until the effects of genetically modified organisms on the health of the environment, animals and humans and the economic risks for organic<sup>1</sup> farmers, particularly smallholder farmers, have been established, they should not be introduced into the world.

We align ourselves with IFOAM-Organics International's statement:

"IFOAM-Organics International is opposed to genetic engineering in agriculture, in view of the unprecedented danger it represents for the entire biosphere and the particular economic and environmental risks it poses for organic producers."

IFOAM –Organics International believes that genetic engineering in agriculture causes, or may cause:

- Negative and irreversible environmental impacts
- Release of organisms which have never before existed in nature and which cannot be recalled
- Pollution of the gene-pool of cultivated crops, micro-organisms and animals
- Pollution of farm organisms
- Denial of free choice, both for farmers and consumers
- Violation of farmers' fundamental property rights and endangerment of their economic independence
- Practices which are incompatible with the principles of sustainable agriculture
- Unacceptable threats to human health

We join IFOAM-Organics International in their call for a ban on GMOs in all agriculture.

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<sup>1</sup> IFOAM-Organics International *definition*: "Organic Agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of **soils, ecosystems** and **people**. It **relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions**, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic Agriculture combines **tradition, innovation** and **science** to benefit the shared environment and promote **fair relationships** and a good **quality of life** for all involved."

## **Our reality**

Over 80% of maize, 90% of soy and 100% of cotton are genetically modified in South Africa. Many other trials have been approved. The list of approved genetically modified organisms worldwide is growing (<http://www.isaaa.org/gmapprovaldatabase>). With globalisation and porous borders genetically modified food is being found in countries that have chosen to ban GMO's. Organic farmers cannot be isolated from environmental pollution or the effects of global development.

## **Our position**

It is not acceptable that the organic sector should bear the burden of the problems caused by the companies promoting genetic engineering. It is IFOAM- Organics International's position that the responsibility for GMO contamination lies with the polluters and that they should be responsible for preventing the spread of GMO's. We therefore support:

- labelling of genetically engineered agricultural products by the producers of GMO's to protect consumers who choose not to consume these products and protect organic farmers who are permitted to use defined conventional inputs which if not labelled, may introduce GMO's into the organic production chain.
- legislation which makes GMO companies liable for all genetic pollution caused by their products and requires them to establish satisfactory buffer zones between GMO and other crops.

Organic farmers should not have to prove their crops are uncontaminated and the farmers have a right not to have their farms contaminated by genetic pollution.

IFOAM-Organics International states: "The potential of GMO contamination does not alter the traditional approach of certifying organic as a "production method" rather than an end-product guarantee. Organic products are not defined or certified as being "free" of unwanted pollution. Just as organic farmers cannot guarantee zero contamination from pesticides they do not use themselves, there is no way for them to guarantee that organic products will not be polluted by traces of GMOs. Contamination that results from circumstances beyond the control of the operator will not necessarily alter the organic status of the operation.

Organic certification shall not imply it is a "GE-free" /"GMO-free" certification. Rather it shall be presented as guaranteeing "production without GE/GMOs".

## Conclusion

The Bryanston Organic & Natural Market will not knowingly allow GMO products to be sold in the market and is committed to being informed on the subject of genetic engineering.

We expect our stallholders to interrogate the ingredients and raw materials used in their products and to inform themselves of the potential threat of GMO contamination in these ingredients and raw materials. We will support our farmers and stallholders in identifying GMO free inputs, including seeds and ingredients, and updating them on new information on GMO products worldwide.

We support the rights of farmers as described in this excerpt from the Declaration by the Forum for Food Sovereignty made in Mali. 2007: *“Food sovereignty is the right of all peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agricultural systems. It puts the aspirations of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. Food sovereignty promotes transparent trade that guarantees just incomes to all peoples as well as the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition. It ensures that the right to use and manage lands territories, water, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those that produce food. Food sovereignty implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social and economic classes and generations.”*

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